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HOMOSEXUALITY

838 [538] Homosexual practices figure in some of the stories, in each case on the part of males. From discussions arising out of these it would appear that homosexuality is actually found among these people, but is rare, and is regarded with intense disfavour. At the end of one such story, told by a young woman, the names of two men, one dead, one living in another village, were mentioned, and also that of the father of a Kurtatchi boy who had been forced to yield to the former, when he was an old man too feeble to resist. The natives said that such people were *pipiu*, a word which from [732] its use in other connexions appears to mean 'mad', though it was also applied to a boy who was deaf and dumb. In one story homo- [762] sexual behaviour started after recovery from an illness, and the man finally committed suicide by jumping from a cliff. It was related as a fact, with the statement that it happened not long ago.

It is known that homosexual practices occur on the plantations, where indentured men may spend three years in 'quarters' without women. Some of the older people told me they did not like their young men to sign on for this reason. It would seem probable that the segregation of the boys wearing the *upi* might have similar consequences, especially considering the very intimate contact in which they live with the older men acting as their *amro* (see pp. 198–9) during their period of seclusion in the bush. But my informants [839] asserted emphatically that this was not the case, although masturbation was freely admitted. It is at least safe to say that homosexual [881] practices do not form part of the puberty ritual, nor do they enter, so far as I could ascertain, into any other ceremonial observances among these people.

The conventional attitude towards homosexuality in this community is definitely one of condemnation. I do not know how far the assertion that manifestations of it occur but rarely may have been due to this, but the impression I received from the reactions of the natives during discussions on the subject was that the disapproval was more than the expression of the orthodox point of view.

[585 881] Imitations of the sexual act are carried out between women at a certain stage in the marriage ceremonies (see p. 91) and in those marking the first menstruation of a girl who is *tsumaun*. These are

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purely ritual acts, and in no respect to be connected with female homosexuality, for which I have no evidence.

CONNEXION WITH ANIMALS

Again arising out of the telling of stories, it appears that intercourse with animals, usually dogs, is known, on the part of both sexes. The talk which followed the story elicited the fact that it does actually occur, but I can form no idea of its frequency. When it formed the subject of a story it was regarded as a joke by the teller—in one case the tale was especially described as a good one—and was received with much laughter by the audience, but there were signs of shame and disgust when we discussed its actual occurrence. This happened in two villages; the reactions of the natives were the same in both.

CONNEXION WITH PLANTS

The legend of origin, according to which the people are said to have sprung from an old woman who was impregnated by means of a banana, has been given in Chapter II. Other instances in which pregnancy is supposed to occur in this manner are given in Chapter III. There are several stories in my collection in which plants, sometimes those possessing aromatic properties, figure in the same role. I give one of these, which is typical of its kind, in case students of sex psychology may see in it some significance.

A woman went to the taro garden, she saw a bush banana, the kind whose stalk is black. She liked it so much that she cut it, and took it to her house, and slept with it. (The phrase here used implies sexual intercourse; it is not clear from my manuscript whether the whole plant or only the fruit is intended.) Then she looked at it, and the skin had come off part of it. Then she thought her man was dead, and she cried over it, and took it up and got red paint and put on it, and got some beads and dressed it up (as is done to the dead). Then she took it and put it in the sea, but it would not sink. So she took it back, and buried it in the bush. Then she set fire to the house where the banana had died (as used to be done to the hut in which a person had died). Then she went and slept in another house.

Another day she went to the bush, and saw a young bush-banana plant coming up, and she said: 'Yes, I think you are the brother of the man I married before, aren't you?' Then she said: 'You stay there just now, by and by you will be big.' Then she went and said to her father: 'Come on, make me another house.' Her father said: 'Why should I